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LIBRARY

Pat O'Brien, director of the Dallas Public Library, wants all attendees to ALA in Dallas to remember to have fun. O'Brien is pictured in the new Children's Wing of the Dallas PL. Photograph by Holly Kupker

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☐ FEATURES ☐

LJ's ALA Program Choices
What to do in Dallas, June 24-29 50

Dining Out, Texas-Style
by Carolyn S. Brodie & 62
Traphene Hickman
Our restaurant picks for the conference

A Resource Center Without Walls
by Sharon Criswell & Bill Howie ... 69
SMU's Business Information Center

The Forum
Automation Standards: Myths & Reality
by Michael J. Mellinger 74

☐ NEWS ☐

Late Bulletins 17
ARL directors meet on technology and preservation

News 18
Association of Research Libraries moves on serials pricing spiral; new edition of the OED

Library Market Outlook 44
Library Construction Continues To Boom by Deborah Selsky

Automation Roundup 47
New multipurpose video photo ID card

Ready Reference 49
Methods that work for librarians

COLUMNS & ☐ DEPARTMENTS ☐

Editorial 4
"This Is My Library!"

Online Databases 76
Why Don't Librarians Use Full-Text Databases? by Carol Tenopir

Research Reports 80
by Mark E. Rorvig

Checklist 84
Getting more out of garage sales

Buyers' Guide 86
Safely transport your VCRs

Letters 6
Calendar 14
People 48
Classified 176
Index to Advertisers 183

JOURNAL

REVIEWS

The Book Review 90

Prepub Alert 90
The Ultimate *glittering, glamorous Howatch*

Reference 96
The AFI Catalog *is back—finally*

Arts & Humanities 104
Frank Zappa on The Real Frank Zappa . . .

Social Sciences 114
An authoritative edition of Anne Frank's diary

Science & Technology 136
Parent's Guide(s) *from Children's Television Workshop*

Fiction 144
An irrepressible Emma Who Saved My Life

Professional Reading 154
Keeping up with IF: must reading

Magazines 156
A baseball newsletter from Brooklyn

Video Reviews 158
A tribute to early Yiddish cinema

Video Movies 166
We have read Randy Pitman, and he is ours

Audio Reviews 169
Manchester's Winston Churchill, Vol. 2

Library Best Sellers 184
Clark's pretty one sleeps atop the list

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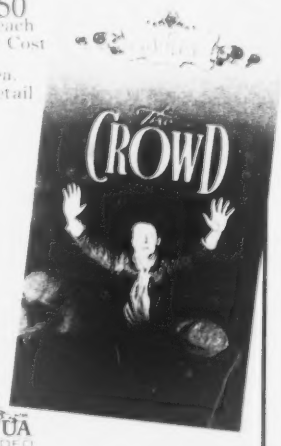

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LIBRARY MARKET OUTLOOK

BY DEBORAH SELSKY

Library Construction Continues To Boom

The one bright spot in an otherwise stagnant, nonresidential building market has been institutional construction, including hospital and health, educational, library, religious, and other miscellaneous buildings. In fact, institutional building provided the only growth in nonresidential construction in 1986 and 1987. While commercial and industrial building declined, institutional construction spending expanded by a rapid 11.3 percent per year.

Demographic trends provide a bright outlook for institutional construction over the long term. First of all, the aging of the population is expected to raise the need for health care; nursing homes and other extended-care facilities should see especially rapid growth.

Secondly, the "echo-boom" population—offspring of the baby boom generation—is already boosting demand for classroom space at the elementary school level. Institutional spending growth is expected to slow through the rest of the decade as budgetary concerns shrink public coffers (see Chart A).

Library construction activity follows the overall trends seen in institutional construction. Since 1984, library construction, which includes new as well as renovation work, has been booming. On average, expenditures on library construction grew almost 25 percent per year from FY 1984 to FY 1988.

Nineteen hundred eighty-eight represented the fifth consecutive year of double-digit growth in library construction. Spending on public library construction grew 11.9 percent last year to a total of $243 million. Local governments provided 77 percent of all funds spent on library construction in FY 1988. The remainder came from the federal and state governments and donations.

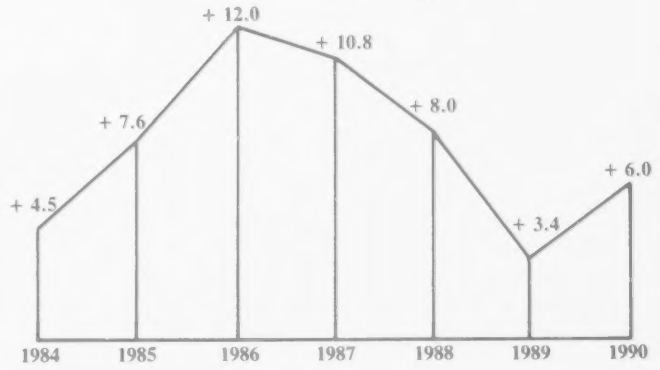
In most of the construction markets, growth in renovation work has been outpacing growth in new building. Though this holds true as well for the library market, expenditures are dominated by new construction.

In FY 1988, 98 new library buildings were completed occupying 1.4 million square feet of space. This compares to 140 libraries or 1.27 million square feet of renovated space. Yet most of the library construction spending for this period (57 percent) went toward new buildings (see Chart B).

A short-run outlook for library construction remains positive. In fact, a recent *LJ* survey ("Library Projects in Progress," December 1988, p. 60) reports that 796 library construction projects were still in progress by June 30, 1988. Yet, budget-tightening by all levels of government will put a constraint on future library construction activity.

CHART A

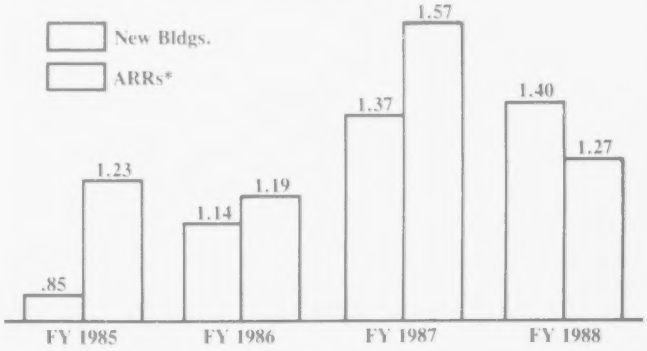
Institutional Construction Spending
Annual % Change



Source: Commerce Dept. Forecast: Cahners Economics

CHART B

Library Construction
Millions of Square Feet



* Additions, Remodelings, & Renovations

Source: "A Grand Design: Library Buildings 1988," *LJ*, December 1988, p.45-67

Deborah Selsky is an economist with Cahners Economics, which provides industry analyses and forecasting services for the markets its magazines serve.

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☐ INDEX TO ADVERTISERS ☐

Harry N. Abrams	121
ABC-Clio	99
Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam	94, 95
Acropolis Books	139
Alps	28
American Assn. for the Advancement of Science	137
Annenberg/CPC Project	167, 172
D. Armstrong Co.	174, 175
Ashton Tate Publications	107
Baker & Taylor Co.	85
Ballinger Books	109
Bantam Doubleday Dell	145
Basil Blackwell	10
Blackwell N. A.	58, 59
Bound to Stay Bound Books	34
R. R. Bowker Co.	36, 37, 61, 87, 128, 173
The Brodart Co.	cov 2, 21, 35
Carmi House Press	146
The Carroll Press Publishers	174, 175
Catalog Card Co.	32
Center for Middle East Studies, Harvard Univ.	118
Chadwyck-Healey	100
CLSI	19
Crown Publishers	123
Data Recall	11
Data Research Assoc.	46
Data Trek	43
Demco	39
Dialog Information Service	68
Do It Yourself Video	160
Dynix	23, 25
Ebsco Subscription Services	157
Facts on File	113
The Faxon Co.	29
Forest Press	129
Gale Research	31, 49
Gallaudet Univ. Press	13
Gaylord Brothers	26, 42
Geac Computers	33
General Information	98
General Research Corp.	82
Robert P. Gillotte Co.	155
Golden Lee	91, 92
Good Books	135
Gulf Publishing Co.	119
G. K. Hall	117, 149
Harper & Row	125
Hay House	162
Health Tapes	174, 175
The Highsmith Co.	22
Ignatius Press	174, 175
Information Access	78
Ingram Library Services	45, cov3
Inlex	20
Intertec	140
J. A. Micropublishing	141
Kapco	24
Liberator Information	41
Library Automation Products	48
Library Bureau	9
Library Systems & Services Inc.	20
Longman Trade	115
McGraw-Hill Book Co.	88, 101
Military History Quarterly	127
Mohawk Midland	41
multiLIS, Sobeco	1
Neal Schumann	151, 153
N. L. Health	174, 175
Northern Illinois Univ. Press	133
Omnigraphics	cov 4
Online Computer Library Center	5, 40, 77
The Oryx Press	97
Oxmoor House	111
Our Sunday Visitor	174, 175
Paragon House Publishers	105
Passport Books	15
Pelican Publishing Co.	152
Publishers Marketing Assn.	147
Research Publications	143
Richards-Wilcox/Aurora	12
Rizzoli International Publishers	106
Simon & Schuster Audio Divn.	171
Social Issues Resources Series	131
Sony Video Software	165
Spacesaver Corp.	27
Springer-Verlag N. A.	142
Jeremy P. Tarcher	116
Taunton Press	30
Trinity Florist	174, 175
United Nations Publications	174, 175
University Copy Services	41
University Microfilm	8
University of Texas Press	118
Utlas International Canada	81
Video Trend	2, 3
VTLS	9, 11, 13
Warner Books	103
Warner Home Videos	161
White Storage & Retrieval Systems	7
John Wiley & Sons	16
The World & I	38
The H. W. Wilson Co.	163
Winnebago	138

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